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Third Review Conference of the States Parties to the Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction

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Informal presentation of requests submitted under Article 5 and of the analyses of these requests

Request for extension of the deadline for completing the destruction of anti-personnel mines in accordance with article 5 of the Convention

Summary

Submitted by the Democratic Republic of the Congo

1. The history of the armed conflicts that have taken place in the country since independence, from 1960 to 1964, 1975 to 1977, 1996 to 1997 and 1998 to 2002, has been marked by the use of anti-personnel mines. Ten years after the ratification of the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention, the Democratic Republic of the Congo was granted an extension of 26 months to clarify the status of landmine contamination in a country with 10 large provinces in addition to the capital, Kinshasa, 145 territories and more than 1,200 decentralized localities stretching over 2,345,400 square kilometres.

2. The contamination, with more than 2,500 casualties already identified, has prompted the Democratic Republic of the Congo to undertake in earnest to eradicate this problem since its ratification of the Convention. This is an enormous challenge because of the numerous difficulties that must be overcome. With support from the international community, the Democratic Republic of the Congo plans to meet its obligations under the Convention, above all now that more light has been cast on the contamination in the country and the problem has become easier to see.

Status of work done in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

3. After the granting of the intermediate extension of 26 months, the Democratic Republic of the Congo continued Global Mine Action Survey (GMAS) and Global Mine Action Assessment (GMAA) operations throughout the country before launching a national survey of anti-personnel mine and submunition contamination. For the GMAS and GMAA operations, in addition to the 82 areas addressed in the previous request, 13 more areas totalling 350,630,5877 square metres have been identified by GMAA in Équateur, Kasaï-Occidental and Katanga Provinces, thus bringing the number of areas to 95. During implementation of the two operations mentioned above, work in 19 of the 82 areas, with a

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surface of 7,903,465 square metres, was halted by GMAS. Between 2011 and October 2013, 162 mines were destroyed as part of mine clearance operations. The updated database thus currently has 76 areas identified through the work of GMAS and GMAA. During this period, the city of Kinshasa and Bandundu and Bas Congo Provinces were declared to be free of anti-personnel mines.

4. Regarding the national survey of anti-personnel mine contamination, a great deal of progress was made thanks to an intensive effort carried out over a seven-month period beginning on 1 May 2013 by international demining operators such as the Mines Advisory Group (MAG), Norwegian People's Aid (NPA), Handicap International (HI) and Dan Church Aid (DCA), and also by Congolese organizations such as the Red Cross of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Action pour le développement intégré des communautés (Action for Comprehensive Community Development) (ADIC), Bureau des Actions de Développement et des Urgences (Development Action and Emergency Bureau) (BADU), Synergie des ONG de lutte contre les mines et les restes explosifs de guerres (NGO Synergy against Mines and Explosive Remnants of War) (SYLAM) and Afrique pour la lutte contre les mines antipersonnelle (Africa against Anti-Personnel Mines) (AFRILAM).

5. The national survey made it possible to identify 54 areas stretching over 411,050 square metres among 403 areas covered, by collecting opinions and data from some 6,431 persons in 142 meetings held in the country's provinces, districts and territories. Surveys were conducted in 390 villages in 8 provinces, 14 districts and 40 territories. During the survey, a total of 264 areas suspected of being dangerous were removed from the list.

6. At this stage the GMAS and GMAA results, combined with those of the national contamination survey, have identified 130 areas, with an estimated 1.8 million square metres, representing 76 mined areas with a total surface area of 1.4 million square metres and 54 areas with a surface of 411,050 square metres, spread over 8 of the country's 11 provinces (Équateur, Kasaï-Occidental, Kasaï-Oriental, Maniema, Nord-Kivu, Katanga, Orientale and Sud-Kivu). However, this does not take into consideration the territories of Aru and Dungu, in Orientale Province, which were not surveyed owing to security problems.

Circumstances which prevent compliance within the time limit of 10 years

7. The reasons why the Democratic Republic of the Congo was unable to meet its treaty obligations within the 10-year period set for 2 December 2012 are the following:

- An inaccurate idea of the nature of the contamination, owing to haphazard collection of information and a lack of appropriate assessment;
- Overestimation of the size of areas suspected of being mined;
- Unavailability or lack of maps of mined areas;
- Security problems and recurring armed conflict;
- Sheer size and complexity of the country: inaccessibility, vegetation, poor state of the roads, changing weather conditions, etc.;
- Prioritization, given the other humanitarian and security emergencies faced by the country;
- Insufficient funding;
- Lack of adequate training for surveys of mines and explosive remnants of war, or lack of surveying skills among the demining operators.

Proposed duration for the extension and reasons for the extension

8. The Democratic Republic of the Congo requests an extension of six years, from 1 January 2015, the date planned for the end of the intermediate extension, until 31 December 2020, for the following reasons:

- To seek out and raise the funds required for the technical surveys and demining of 130 identified areas throughout the country;
- To seek out the technical and financial means to allow the country to finalize the assessment or survey in the territories of Aru and Dungu, in Orientale Province, and to carry out the mine clearance itself;
- To follow developments in the security situation (as mine clearance in some areas is dependent on operations carried out against armed groups by the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo);
- From the operational standpoint, based on the history of mine clearance work, and taking into consideration both the operational capacity and the financial resources earmarked for mine clearance between 2009 and 2013, maintaining the same capacity levels (same demining operators, working constantly at the same pace) and with the same available resources, it will take at least 47 months to complete the work, not counting deployment times and risks of delays owing to poor road conditions;
- To deal with unpredictable elements such as vegetation and weather patterns that, with the rains and floods, make it impossible to maintain a constant pace of mine clearance.

Humanitarian, social, economic and environmental implications of the extension

9. The humanitarian, social, economic and environmental implications are enormous and will have a major impact, especially in the north-eastern parts of Katanga, in Kisangani (Orientale Province), the areas around Dimbelenge and Dekese (Kasaï-Occidental Province), the northern part of Maniema Province and the south-eastern part of Équateur Province, where the confirmed presence of anti-personnel mines is still today a major obstacle to a resumption of agricultural and economic activities in the worst-affected communities. This has an adverse impact on food self-sufficiency and on gross domestic product. It thus contributes to worsening poverty and destitution in the affected communities.

10. The mines impact study has reported that a number of people are living with the daily threat of suspected or confirmed mine contamination in their immediate surroundings, resulting in blocked access to agriculture, housing and roads and tracks.

11. In addition to those thus affected, there are also refugees and displaced people. In partnership with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Democratic Republic of the Congo is continuing to work on the question of the return of Congolese refugees currently living for example in the United Republic of Tanzania, Zambia, Burundi, the Republic of the Congo, the Central African Republic, Malawi and Uganda. It is also working to address the sensitive question of the many internally displaced people dispersed throughout the country, a large concentration of whom are in the east.

12. Additionally, over 2,500 victims of mines and explosive remnants of war have been identified throughout the country, and for the most part they have never received appropriate assistance. The outlook for their dependents, and also for those victims in inaccessible or remote areas of the country who are still to be identified, remains grim.

Plan of the Democratic Republic of the Congo to meet its obligations during the requested extension period

13. From the operational point of view, the Democratic Republic of the Congo will give priority first to conducting technical surveys and mine clearance in the 130 areas identified by the national survey of anti-personnel mine contamination. An operational plan will be instituted, revising the national strategic plan for the period from 2012 to 2016, to begin implementation before the date scheduled for the beginning of the extension period. This work schedule will take into consideration the country's priorities: freeing up residential and agricultural areas, areas where roads are in need of repair and areas for the return of refugees and displaced persons.

14. The Democratic Republic of the Congo intends to consolidate the existing operational capacity of organizations already working in the country while building the capacity of mine clearance personnel seconded to the country's Armed Forces and the National Police by the Corps of Engineers to carry out humanitarian demining activities. While covering larger and more complicated areas, observing the priorities listed above, the operational plan forecasts annual figures that will decrease in terms of surface area and funding over time.

15. During the extension period, the Centre congolais de lutte antimines (Congolese Mine Action Centre) (CCLAM) intends to improve the entire coordination system by updating national standards and by strengthening quality management (quality control and assurance) and information management. Working closely with all operators, CCLAM will build the capacity of its staff in all aspects and will work to finish implementation of the transition plan with the United Nations Mine Action Service (UNMAS) in the country.

Funding and technical means available to the Democratic Republic of the Congo to meet its obligations during the requested extension period

16. From the financial point of view, the country's needs for this period will amount to approximately US$ 20 million: US$ 19,431,730 for mine clearance in 130 areas suspected of being mined, for 1.3 million square metres, and US$ 568,270 to complete surveying and mine clearance in Aru and Dunguet, in Orientale Province.

17. In accordance with the workplan corresponding to the country's priorities, the annual costs decrease, with an average of US$ 3.2 million for 210,000 square metres per year. This covers only operational costs, i.e., personnel, equipment and transport.

18. The Government is committed to earmarking approximately US$ 600,000 from its budget to cover the programme's operating costs, including coordination. As for technical means, the plans call for 90 per cent of the mine clearance to be carried out manually, and 10 per cent to be conducted using combined techniques (manually, along with mechanical means or canine mine clearance). The Democratic Republic of the Congo currently benefits from services provided by international demining operators whose manual and technical teams' technical capacity should be maintained so as to cover part of the needs mentioned above.

19. The manual clearance part will be strengthened with the reintroduction of five or six teams from the Armed Forces and the National Police who have already served with all the international demining operators under the national strategic plan for 2012 to 2016. For them, it will be indispensible to receive training and new technical tools to ensure effective and efficient management of the work to be done during the extension period.